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• (1430)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Today we're having the 18th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, February 3, 2021, and the motion adopted by the committee on February 17, the committee is beginning its study of Bill C-204, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, with regard to final disposal of plastic waste.

Today we have two panels. In the first panel, a one-person panel essentially, we're going to be hearing from the sponsor of the bill, MP Scot Davidson.

Congratulations, Mr. Davidson, on getting your bill to this stage of the legislative process. We all know that it's no small feat, and it reflects on the hard work that you've been doing.

We will start with Mr. Davidson for a little more than half an hour and then we will resume with a second panel.

I don't think I need to explain the rules to you, Mr. Davidson. Obviously you have five minutes, and when you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

Other than that, the floor is yours.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start by thanking the members of this committee for all the work they've done to date in protecting the environment. I'm sure the bill being studied today presents another opportunity to further these efforts.

Bill C-204 seeks to prohibit the export of plastic waste from Canada to other countries, where it is all too often being burned, dumped in the ocean or otherwise disposed of improperly, with devastating impacts on the environment.

Other countries, such as Australia, New Zealand and the U.K., have already taken action on this important issue, but Canada has not. In fact, the current federal government has rejected all calls to implement a plastic waste ban, claiming that the practice of sending plastic waste to foreign countries is beneficial, despite so much evidence to the contrary. We can't continue to do what we've been doing. Canada needs to show leadership and take responsibility for its own plastic waste.

This can be achieved through Bill C-204, which amends the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to prohibit the export of plastic waste to foreign countries for final disposal. This bill has been drafted to ensure that our domestic laws include a strong prohibition on the export of plastic waste that works with our international agreements while still permitting the export of properly recycled plastic waste.

To this end, the definition of "plastic waste" outlined in the accompanying schedule is derived straight from the Basel Convention. Likewise, "final disposal" is a specifically defined term, meaning "Operations which do not lead to the possibility of resource recovery, recycling, reclamation...or alternative [reuse]". Examples of final disposal operations include dumping plastic into landfills, releasing it into oceans or keeping it in permanent storage. By focusing on final disposal operations, we can ensure that legitimate, sustainable and environmentally sound exports of plastic waste are not prohibited.

Bill C-204 would bring all of these changes in line with the rest of the regulations in this section of the act. This will give the minister the ability to add or remove plastics from the prohibited list, and it would also apply fines and penalties against anyone who contravenes it. Through these changes, the export of plastic waste for final disposal from Canada to other countries will finally be prohibited.

As the committee studies this bill, I believe there are some important considerations that must be made. Foremost, of course, is the environment. It has to be. It's been made abundantly clear that the export of plastic waste, especially to developing countries, cannot continue as it has. The export of plastic waste has decimated the environment in many countries, and it is affecting our own environment here in Canada as well. The good news, Mr. Chair, is that here is a better way. The first and most important step is to ban these kinds of plastic exports.

It is important to consider the role of industry. I'm a small business person myself, and I know that these kinds of changes can have real impacts on businesses. However, it's also an opportunity. There are so many innovative Canadian companies that have answers to our own plastic waste problem. I have mentioned a few before, but Cielo Waste Solutions is a perfect example of a company poised to make a real difference with a clean waste-management process. The biggest problem right now is getting enough Canadian plastic on hand. Too much is being exported away. It is also important to ensure that plastic waste can be exported if it is being recycled properly.

Not so long ago, Mr. Chair, this very committee recommended a plastic waste export ban in its report entitled "The Last Straw: Turning the Tide on Plastic Pollution in Canada", which was presented to the House in June 2019. That very recommendation, number 11, came after months of committee meetings and many witness submissions from environmental groups, industry and governmental departments. Bill C-204 offers the best opportunity to make this recommendation a reality.

I am grateful for the the support Bill C-204 has in the House and among Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I brought this issue forward because I truly believe that our environment and the issue of plastic waste should not be partisan issues, Mr. Chair. I have enjoyed some constructive conversations with colleagues from all parties on this issue, and I appreciate their insights and contributions.

● (1435)

I look forward to following the committee's work as this bill is studied this week.

With Bill C-204, Canada can take a leadership role once more, and ban the export of plastic waste.

Thanks very much to all my colleagues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Davidson.

We'll go to a six-minute round of questioning, beginning with Mrs. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to my colleague.

The only point I'll disagree with is the one Mr. Davidson made during his sound check, when he said he had the best riding. There are many MPs here who would challenge him in terms of whose riding is truly the best.

This is a really important bill, and I'm glad to see it brought forward.

The member talked about the committee, and how it had recommended it. That was before the pandemic. The pandemic has shown us the importance of being self-sufficient, whether it's developing our own PPE or disposing of plastic waste.

Can you talk a bit more about your motivation? You had a very fortunate spot in terms of introducing a bill. Of all the different areas you could have chosen, why was this important to you?

Mr. Scot Davidson: As you know, I do have the greatest riding in Canada, and it is home to Lake Simcoe.

I was a small business person going way back. I grew up, actually, on Lake Simcoe. I have been around water all my life. Clean water is very important to me. All committee members here know that when we—all MPs, witnesses, our great clerk, our chair—think of Canada, when we talk about Canada from coast to coast to coast, we think about Canada with its pristine coastlines, the rocky mountain ridges and the flowing waterfalls.

Water is very important. We know there's a plastic problem in the oceans. I mentioned the U.K. and Australia, but it's time for Canada to take a leadership approach on plastics, and that's why I truly believe Bill C-204 is so important.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: At the second reading debate, you obviously had solid support from the majority of the House, which allowed you to get to this stage. I understand the Liberals were expressing reservation and did not support you. As you listened to the debate, were there any particular issues that stood out for you that you believe managed to turn the corner?

Again, I was surprised that a government that has talked very clearly about plastics and plastic waste did not stand with you on this particular bill.

● (1440)

Mr. Scot Davidson: I was hoping that all members in the House of Commons would stand with me arm to arm from coast to coast to coast on this bill—the Greens, the NDP, the Bloc, ourselves. This is an important initiative. I did try to do some arm-twisting. I wasn't successful with our Liberal colleagues. I hope that we as a committee will work together. Canadians have put us here to work together, and I truly believe that everyone who sits on this committee is going to work together.

Gord Johns has spoken about plastics. He has risen in the House of Commons 87 times to speak about plastics. You can see how important this issue is to other colleagues. It's important we take a leadership role as Canadians, as parliamentarians, and work together on this issue. I'm happy to listen and hear from the witnesses in the committee as this bill moves along.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: No bill can be perfect at first blush. As you listened to the arguments at second reading, was there anything you heard that you thought was important that needed to be considered for an amendment? Is there anything that really stands out in your mind, from the second reading debate, that might need a bit of massaging in the bill?

Mr. Scot Davidson: What I heard at second reading was that colleagues were looking for something stronger. That's how much our parliamentarians are concerned about this issue of plastics. I would expect that we can all work together as a committee, and as a group, to come up with solutions. If there are amendments that have to be put, I'm happy to listen to them, quite frankly, and to work together with parliamentarians on this bill.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mostly you saw that there was a real interest in terms of making this bill as strong as possible.

I thought it was interesting that you talked about how Canadians have some companies that are innovative. I remember being able to buy some wonderful recycled plastic products in the past that just aren't available anymore. Is that a real issue?

Mr. Scot Davidson: There is a shortage. One company I highlighted was Goodwood Plastic. Even just outside my own riding, there was a development that was done on a small craft harbour. We have a lot of deteriorating lumber that just doesn't stand up in the way new recycled plastic lumber does. These Canadian companies guarantee it for 50 years.

As parliamentarians and as Canadians, we have to be pushing Canadian industry and showcasing Canadian industry. We have to be a facilitator to Canadian industry and give them all those tools to make them a success.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McLeod. You have 10 seconds remaining.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Saini, please. You have six minutes.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Hello, Mr. Davidson. It's always good to see you. I'm glad you haven't lost any of your enthusiasm.

I'm interested in some points of view from you. Your bill is going to have significant impacts on stakeholders along the value chain of plastics, including waste management, recycling organizations, provinces and municipalities, and businesses that trade in waste. Did you consult with any of these stakeholders when you were developing your bill?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Thanks for the question.

Raj, I miss you, too, in person. It's great to see you on here.

Look, I did consult industry. As I said, I had them in my office. Understand that I was probably as shocked as you that I drew number five in the PMB lottery and had to get this bill drafted quickly with the House of Commons. That was actually a bit of a chore, and meeting with witnesses, all at the beginning of COVID.

That said, I still managed to do it. I did reach out to industry. One of the things that was of concern to industry was that they had the idea they couldn't.... They said, "Scot, what if we have something going over to the United States that was going to be an input in something with St. Marys Cement? We can't send it over to the U.S. anymore." That's why I concentrated on plastic for final disposal. That's why that specific term is there, plastic for "final disposal".

• (1445)

Mr. Raj Saini: Mr. Davidson, you also know, and your leader has said this quite publicly many times, that he wants to respect provincial jurisdiction. When you're dealing with waste management issues, it's the purview of the provinces, and by extension, municipal governments. Do you think your bill will make it harder for them or more expensive for them to carry out their job?

Mr. Scot Davidson: I have to be honest with you. When I met with industry, I believe industry recognized, and I think you would recognize, that there is a problem in the world's oceans. We have a problem with plastic. At the end of the day, our federal government,

truly being us, has to try to solve that problem, work with stakeholders and truly show leadership. We need to take a leadership role federally and show people the way.

Mr. Raj Saini: If you take this a bit more broadly than domestically, in terms of the United States and Canada, as you know, we import and export municipal solid waste to one another all the time. How do you think this ban or prohibition would impact Canada-U.S. relations?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Do you mean waste going over to the U.S.?

Mr. Raj Saini: Yes, or coming from the U.S.

Mr. Scot Davidson: As I said, the reason I chose waste for final disposal is that, if we don't look at the U.S., what happens is that the solution right now of just throwing it over the fence and not worrying about it—out of sight, out of mind—is a solution. If I didn't look at the U.S., at what would happen if we left the U.S. open, we'd lose control of our waste once it had gone there.

In turn, someone could put that on a cargo ship in the U.S., send it to the Philippines or Bangladesh and we'd have no control over it. That was my thought process when I made up this bill. When I consulted with industry, we took the definitions right from the Basel Convention.

Mr. Raj Saini: Is my time up, Chair?

The Chair: No. You have a good two minutes.

Mr. Raj Saini: Okay.

Now that you've mentioned the Basel Convention, let's look at that, because I think that's where the technicality lies. I don't think anybody's going to disagree with the spirit of your bill. I think we're all there, but we also have to recognize that on the issue of plastic waste and the need to take action, a key reason we didn't support this legislation is that it's legally mute.

You mentioned the Basel Convention. The prior and informed consent provisions of the Basel Convention—which went into effect this year—would apply to all Basel signatories. The amended agreement, relating to the export of plastic with the United States, would govern the cross-boundary shipments of plastic waste, so why would the bill still be required when we're already a signatory and when we're already following the amendments and the provisions of that agreement, which 188 countries have signed?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Canada hasn't filed the final amendment.

There have been three amendments, and Canada has only been a signatory to two. The U.S. isn't a signatory to the Basel Convention.

First of all, Environment Canada doesn't even track plastic waste going outside of the country. There were 400,000 tonnes of plastic waste exported for which no permits were issued.

The fact of the matter is that when you look at the world's oceans and look at what's happening, you can see that we have a plastics problem. It's staring us right in the face, and this is still happening regardless, so we have to have a law with some teeth to stop this from happening.

Mr. Raj Saini: Have you looked at any of the World Trade Organization agreements, or anything we have, and how that would be impacted?

The Chair: Please answer very quickly, because the time's up.

Mr. Raj Saini: How would our international trade obligations be impacted? Have you looked at that impact with the WTO, with GATT, the general agreement on tariffs and trade, and all those international agreements that we have? Have you looked at that impact?

Mr. Scot Davidson: No, I—

The Chair: We could have a yes or no, maybe, because we have to go on to Madame Pausé now. You can always give the answer when responding to another member, Mr. Davidson.

[Translation]

Ms. Pausé, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here.

I want to commend the initiative of the member who introduced this bill, which addresses a major environmental issue.

We know that the plastic situation is critical for our ecosystems. I welcome this bill because it tries to find solutions here, internally, in order to stop exporting our issues.

My first question concerns the Basel Convention, which we've just discussed.

We know that there have been amendments to the Basel Convention. The bill would need to be amended, particularly schedule 7.

Are you open to updating the bill to reflect the latest amendments to the Basel Convention?

• (1450)

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Thanks for the question.

Yes, I'm open. As I said, I'm open to working with this committee and following the amendments that the committee looks at. This is a chance for us again as parliamentarians to have Canada take a leadership role like Australia, like the U.K., and make this bill work.

We have something on the table. We're in a minority Parliament now, and that could change at any time. I appreciate the committee convening to look at Bill C-204. It is my hope that we can work together to make this work.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pausé: Of course.

You're positioning your bill as an amendment to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. We've known since the Speech from

the Throne, and even before the speech, that there will be amendments to the act.

Do you plan to take steps with regard to these amendments?

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson: I actually haven't seen any amendments to my bill as of yet. Perhaps I didn't receive them, but I haven't seen any amendments as of yet.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pausé: In other words, you have positioned your bill within the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. However, we know that the current government wants to review the act. I thought that it would be a good idea for you to take steps when the act is amended.

I have another question for you. If we focus only on the export of plastic waste, we aren't solving the problem. Researcher Marc Olivier said that Canadian plastic production amounts to 3.25 million tonnes in Canada alone. That's too much to stop exporting entirely.

Would this bill be part of a larger plan? If so, can you outline that plan?

If we're looking at exports alone, that isn't enough.

Do you have an idea of a larger plan to address the plastic waste issue?

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Thanks for the question.

My bill is specifically focusing on the export of plastic waste for final disposal. That's what I want to focus on. That's what Bill C-204 focuses on.

If there are amendments here today to make it more robust, obviously I'm looking forward to hearing from the witnesses today regarding this. I'm happy for any input we can get on that.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pausé: I have another suggestion for the bill. Why not include a section on better screening of plastic waste streams that aren't destined for final disposal?

We know that a number of these plastics—you referred to them in your presentation—will end up being burned or buried. It's a myth to think that they'll be recycled.

What do you think about the idea of establishing a mechanism such as a registry to ensure the traceability of the waste?

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Again, I would say to colleagues that this is a private member's bill, not a government bill. I was literally under the gun to draft this bill.

If there are amendments that the Bloc wants to put forward, or the NDP—I know Raj is going to work with me on this bill—I'm happy to see those amendments. I'm happy to hear from industry witnesses, who are all very important, and to talk to Canadians.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'll make this quick.

Mr. Davidson, in your bill, you referred to the “final disposal” of plastic waste. It seems that the industry is concerned about this wording.

Does your bill leave room for waste processing?

[*English*]

Mr. Scot Davidson: It strictly deals with disposal. The final disposal of plastic waste is what it deals with.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: The six minutes are up, Ms. Pauzé.

I'll now give the floor to Ms. Collins.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much, Mr. Davidson, for being here with us today.

Thanks for putting forward this bill, which seeks to end the unacceptable practice of exporting our plastic waste to countries that don't have the infrastructure to deal with it. We should never be dumping our waste on other countries.

I think you outlined pretty well the impacts on health, the environment and our oceans. They've been so severe, especially for countries with low-income, marginalized and racialized populations. These countries have been particularly hard hit by Canada's lack of leadership on this issue. It's really important that we're moving forward in a way that will address it.

I've spoken to a number of experts on the Basel Convention. They've expressed some concern that specifying plastic waste for final disposal only, as this bill does, wouldn't actually stop us from exporting a lot of the plastic waste that is ending up in the oceans and landfills or being burned. The plastic that's ending up in poor countries, like the Philippines and Cambodia, often is not being labelled for final disposal; it's being labelled as recycling, but then turns out to be contaminated and not recyclable in those countries, or they don't have the infrastructure to deal with it.

I'm wondering about your intention with Bill C-204. It sounds like it was really to help prevent this kind of waste ending up in these countries that don't have the infrastructure. I'm wondering if you could speak a bit to that.

Mr. Scot Davidson: I'm a supporter of Canadian innovation. Again, Canada has to harness our innovative Canadian companies and showcase them.

I'm a supporter of recycling. We all want to keep plastic circular in the economy; that is our goal, and I think my Liberal colleagues would agree with me on that. I know Raj does.

We want to see a successful recycling program take place in Canada. We want to see innovative Canadian businesses. Do we want to see a problem with plastics in the world's oceans? Quite frankly, Laurel, people ask me in my riding how this affects them in Lake Simcoe. Well, we know that there are articles just out on microplastics and on fish consuming plastics. We know Gord Johns has spoken on this issue to my colleagues on the B.C. coast, and to my colleagues in P.E.I. and New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in relation to harvesting lobster.

These are all important things. I'm open to making this bill as robust as possible.

Ms. Laurel Collins: With regard to highlighting our local businesses, there's a small business start-up here in Victoria, Flipside Plastics, that is launching a microrecycling pilot project focused on local recycling. I can imagine that if we were to find a way to make this bill robust, the additional benefit would be that we'd be supporting our local recycling companies here.

It sounds as if you would be open to changing some of the language if you were sure that removing the reference to “final disposal” and replacing it with something more robust would be in line with what you were trying to achieve with this bill.

Mr. Scot Davidson: That's correct. I support any amendments that are going to make this bill as robust as possible and taking into account industry for sure, but again, and I can't stress this enough, we know there's a plastics problem. I think the David Suzuki Foundation is here today to speak to this as well. I think as colleagues we all know, and I'm not meaning to harp on it, that this is truly a way Canada can take a leadership role on this file of plastic waste.

• (1500)

Ms. Laurel Collins: Schedule 7, as proposed, contains several compounds. They include groups of polymers that are used in the production of plastic and plastic products. It also appears that some plastics, such as PVC, may be missing.

I wanted you to outline how the list of items on schedule 7 was determined. Would you be open to making changes?

Mr. Scot Davidson: The list is straight from the Basel Convention.

I know I told Peter earlier that my bill has been left open. The minister can add or remove items from that list. Again, in drafting it, time was of the essence, so we went right to the Basel Convention for the list. If there is a problem with a certain defined term or if it has to be changed, the minister can make those changes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: OECD countries have their own agreement for trade in plastic waste. The Basel ban amendment, which Canada refused to ratify, bans OECD countries from shipping hazardous waste destined for final disposal and certain hazardous waste destined for reuse, recycling and recovery to non-OECD states.

Was it your intention with the bill to address some of the problems in that ban amendment that the ban amendment aims to address? I want you to flesh that out a little more when it comes to non-OECD states and OECD countries.

The Chair: You have about 25 seconds.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Yes, it was my plan to address that with the bill. We know non-OECD countries can't handle plastic as well as we can in the developed world. We've all seen the pictures of plastics being burned literally at the side of the oceans. That's also not environmentally friendly.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Davidson.

That concludes our rounds. We thank you for your very clear explanation of your bill and your very clear and direct comments. We appreciate your answering these questions to lead off the study of your bill.

We look forward to the day we can all get together again in the House, and it will be good to see you.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Chair, I'm really looking forward to it. Come up to Lake Simcoe anytime. Colleagues, keep your sticks on the ice. Thanks so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have our second panel, which is a five-member panel.

From the Basel Action Network, we have James Puckett. We have, from the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Ms. Elena Mantagaris and Mr. Bob Masterson. From the David Suzuki Foundation, we have Sabaa Khan, and from the Recycling Council of Ontario, we have Jo-Anne St. Godard.

We have five minutes available to each witness for opening statements. Then we'll go to a couple of rounds of questions.

Who would like to start?

Mr. Puckett, since you're first on the list, would you like to begin?

• (1505)

Mr. James Puckett (Executive Director, Basel Action Network): Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Jim Puckett. I'm the founder and director of the Basel Action Network, an international organization that takes its name from the Basel Convention. The Basel Convention is a UN treaty that seeks to control the export and import of hazardous household wastes and, more recently, plastic wastes.

At the outset, I wish to applaud Mr. Davidson for his profound and sincere concern over what is indeed a profound problem: plastic waste. The amount of plastic waste being produced globally is frightening, and it is increasing every year. It is highly polluting

and often toxic, yet the industry that produces it actually has few answers when it comes to what to do about it.

For many years, we in developed countries have quietly exported this waste to China. This was until two years ago, when China said "Enough; no more." This sudden refusal by China to take our waste caught countries like the U.S. and Canada flat-footed and sent waste brokers scrambling to divert our waste to other Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

Last year, the U.S. exported over 25,000 metric tons per month to such countries. Canada exported less, around 1,000 metric tons per month. Collectively, the U.S. and Canada are sending more than 300,000 metric tons of our plastic waste to developing countries each year.

It's appropriate, in our view, to consider the U.S. and Canada together in this mess, because late last year the Canadian and U.S. governments secretly concluded a deal to ignore the Basel Convention's recent decision to control trade in contaminated and mixed plastics. Rather, the two countries wanted to allow the trade between them to remain opaque and uncontrolled.

This bilateral pact was condemned by the Center for International Environmental Law, as it ignores Canada's obligations under the Basel Convention. Further, it allows Canadian traders to use the United States, which is not a party to the Basel Convention, as a pivot point to export Canadian plastic waste via U.S. ports to Asia, thus undermining Canada's requirements under the convention.

However, here's the kicker for today's hearing. The legislation proposed by Bill C-204 aims to halt exports for final disposal, but all of this waste now moving to developing countries is not moving for the stated purpose of final disposal; it is all moving for recycling. That might sound good, except that this so-called environmentally benign recycling in Asia is anything but.

This kind of recycling is in fact a fraud perpetuated on all of us. I say this because a large proportion of the plastic waste cannot be economically recycled anywhere in the world. It is simply dumped in Asian farmland and routinely set afire. Even those plastic wastes that do get into the Asian factories to be melted down for some further use create an occupational health nightmare. The very harmful fumes of volatile organic compounds, mixed with chemical additives, become the indoor atmosphere breathed all day long, six days a week, by mostly women factory workers.

I have been inside these factories. This recycling guarantees a splitting headache within five minutes, and of course the long-term effects are far worse.

In fact, then, the biggest global problem, which Mr. Davidson and others are hoping to address with this bill, will not be addressed, because the bill currently only looks at exports for final disposal, which is landfilling or incineration. The bill currently does not address the heart of the problem, which is exports for recycling.

For this reason, this well-intended legislation should be amended, and how to do that is clear. The parties of the Basel Convention have already agreed to ban the export of hazardous waste for recycling from developed to developing countries. This prohibition is found as the new article 4A of the convention.

For some reason, Canada has refused to ratify this new article, something which all of the European Union and another 70 countries have done. Canada must do this. While they are at it, they can properly address the plastic and household waste export issue by modelling what the EU has done and include wastes listed in Basel annex II in the hazardous waste export ban to developing countries. That annex II is where the plastic wastes now sit.

• (1510)

In sum, to correct Canada's current stance, we recommend the following: Amend the current bill to add, in addition to the ban on export of plastic wastes for final disposal to all countries, an export ban of annex II wastes, meaning dirty and mixed plastics—

The Chair: We're out of time.

Mr. James Puckett: I'm almost finished.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. James Puckett: As well, Canada should immediately update its Basel ratification by ratifying the newly adopted article 4A. Finally, Canada should terminate the arrangement signed with the U.S. that allows no control at the border for contaminated and mixed plastic wastes.

By doing these things, Canada will be saying a proper yes to a responsible and ethical circular economy while saying no to an exploitative global waste shell game.

The Chair: We'll go to the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada now. We'll start with Ms. Mantagaris.

Mr. Bob Masterson (President and Chief Executive Officer, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada): Mr. Chair, I think I'll be giving—

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. There's only one person speaking.

Mr. Masterson, go ahead.

Mr. Bob Masterson: Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members. I'm here on behalf of the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada. We are an \$80-billion chemistry and plastics industry in Canada. We are Canada's third-largest industry, with 80% of everything we make exported out of this nation. This is not a made-in-Canada issue. This is a global issue.

I'm pleased to be joined by my colleague, Elena Mantagaris. She'll certainly assist in responding to any of your questions.

Before I start by offering our perspectives on the bill itself, I think it's important to have some context.

First, it's very important to understand that our industry shares Parliament's and society's view that unmanaged plastic waste has no place in the natural environment.

Second, our industry accepts that it does have a disproportionate share of responsibility for addressing the issue. That must start with the acceleration of innovation towards a circular economy and with design. Our industry has set out ambitious goals in North America to ensure that by 2030 no plastic packaging is designed that is not recyclable. That's less than a mere decade away.

The third area is one that people are often surprised by. I think it's a major difference, at times, between Canada and the United States. Our industry fully endorses extended producer responsibility programs, EPR programs, such as the one in British Columbia, whereby industry is fully responsible for paying for and operating recycling systems that achieve aggressive province-wide recycling targets. We're working every day with other provinces. We expect that in a mere few years, we will have 85% of the Canadian population within industry-funded EPR programs.

Finally, our industry believes that a circular economy for plastics is not only possible but indeed achievable, and within a modest time frame. Our customers are demanding it. There's no question about that. There's a need for a number of transformational initiatives to respond to those customer demands.

You know, we've heard comments about small industries, small solutions. This is a global industry. It's a big industry. The real solutions are getting the recovered materials back into the plastic-producing facilities so that the resins themselves have a high material content of recycled resin, no matter what products they go into. If you have a 50% recycled content resin, then whatever those resins go to will have a 50% recycled content. That's a solution at scale.

We already shared with this committee a comprehensive critique of the private member's bill, so our remarks will be brief.

Again, we do understand Parliament's laudable intentions. Canadians are surely frustrated by the images of mixed, improperly sorted, contaminated plastic waste being sent off for disposal without any realistic expectation that they'll be recycled or processed. However, in our view, Bill C-204 is not necessary to address this. The bill was initiated prior to the Basel amendments, and those significant amendments have come into place, ratified by more than 170 countries, including Canada. The work continues. There's a lot of work in developing guidance for those amendments, and Canada's at the forefront of that work.

Certainly one thing this committee should take into account is the guidance that comes out of the Basel Convention for these amendments. Those amendments do outlaw trade in hazardous plastic wastes and in non-hazardous post-consumer plastics not intended for recycling and without prior and informed consent.

On many levels, Bill C-204 is redundant to those requirements, and at the same time it adds confusion. On the list of plastic wastes, we include things like ethylene, which is a feedstock. It's not a plastic waste.

MP Davidson gave a nice definition of "final disposal", but there is no definition of it in the bill itself. There's a lack of process that will allow for the continued movement of post-consumer materials, specifically between Canada, the United States and other OECD countries.

There's a lot of work to realizing a global circular economy for post-consumer plastics. It starts with thinking of these materials as a resource and not a waste. We know what to do with waste: We put it in landfill. We know what to do with resources: We let resources move freely between political jurisdictions and across boundaries, so especially in the OECD countries, especially in this integrated North American marketplace, we have to tear down and not build up those barriers to moving post-consumer resources around. We have to recover back into Canada the material that goes into the U.S. with our products so that we can have that circular economy at scale.

Again, if we focus only on what we do in Canada, that's the 20% of plastics that we produce here that stays here. We send out 80% of what we make. If we want our facilities here to have plastic resin that has a high material content of post-consumer plastics, we need to have a mechanism to make sure we bring that back. Thickening the border for the exchange of post-consumer plastics as a resource will not assist with that.

• (1515)

Mr. Chair, those are our comments for today. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masterson.

We'll go now to Dr. Khan, from the David Suzuki Foundation, for five minutes.

Dr. Sabaa Khan (Director General, Quebec and Atlantic Canada, David Suzuki Foundation): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To your members, I appreciate the invitation to appear before the committee today. Today's testimonies have highlighted the significant environmental and human health harms caused by plastic

waste and the need to ensure a circular economy for plastics in order to mitigate pollution from plastics production and consumption.

Despite the devastating impacts of plastic pollution, global trading in plastic waste has mainly operated outside the scope of international rules relating to the transboundary movement of hazardous and certain other environmentally problematic wastes. These rules, as you know, are contained in the Basel Convention, a treaty signed by 187 countries, including Canada. Similar to the intent of Bill C-204, this treaty was adopted with the intention of ending toxic waste dumping towards developing countries.

While the Basel Convention obliges its parties to apply the procedure of informed consent when exporting, importing or transiting hazardous and certain non-hazardous wastes identified under the treaty, until 2019 the treaty did not explicitly provide for the application of these controls to solid plastic waste. In May 2019, however, it was amended to enhance transparency and accountability in the plastic waste trade. These rules, known as the plastic waste amendments, entered into force on January 1, 2021. Canada ratified the plastic waste amendments last December.

By virtue of its ratification, Canada is obliged to ensure that shipments of both hazardous plastic waste and non-hazardous plastic waste, newly identified under annex II of the Basel Convention as requiring special consideration, are controlled under the procedure of informed consent when exiting or entering the country.

This latter category of waste requiring special consideration encompasses the types of mixed and contaminated plastic waste shipments that were exported from Canada and seized in the Philippines and Malaysia in recent highly publicized cases of waste dumping. A similar shipment from Canada of mixed plastic waste was seized in Belgium at the port of Antwerp on November 9, 2019, while in transit towards India.

It is precisely because of incidents like these that parties to the Basel Convention, including Canada, decided to enhance the regulatory oversight of the plastic waste trade. It is also because of these incidents that Bill C-204 is before us today. The table provided to the committee as a reference document explains what Canada's new legal obligations are under Basel and their current status of implementation. The only plastic waste streams that should be exported from Canada without prior notification and consent are non-hazardous plastic waste streams listed in annex IX of the Basel Convention. As an OECD member, Canada also assumes legal obligations under the OECD council decision regulating the waste trade between OECD members.

While both the Basel Convention and the OECD council decision oblige Canada to regulate most mixed plastic waste shipments under enhanced environmental controls, these legal requirements have yet to be implemented in federal law. Other countries are ahead of us here; the European Union incorporated the Basel plastic waste amendments into the EU waste shipment regulation in October of last year. Bill C-204 is a positive step towards implementing Canada's obligations under Basel; however, the bill needs to be strengthened to achieve its intended purpose and to align with the Basel Convention amendments. The prohibition on export of plastic wastes for final disposal will be difficult to implement, as shipments are not identified in this way, and we know that the problem stems from shipments falsely labelled for recycling as green list waste.

The solution to ending the leakage of Canada's plastic waste into the global environment is for Bill C-204 to mirror the language of the Basel plastic waste amendments. In the interest of advancing the circular economy for plastics, non-hazardous plastic waste listed under annex XI of the Basel Convention should continue to be traded freely, while trade in plastic wastes categorized under the Basel Convention as hazardous or requiring special consideration should be subject to the requirements of section 185 of CEPA.

Canada needs a law addressing plastic waste exports. An arrangement signed between Canada and the U.S. prior to Canada's ratification of the plastic waste amendments has ignited major concern that Canadian plastic waste exports from the U.S. may be shipped onward for final disposal in developing countries. To effectively prohibit Canadian plastic waste from being dumped in developing countries, Canada should ratify the Basel ban amendment, which would restrict all hazardous waste exports to non-OECD countries. Bill C-204 should further implement the Basel ban amendment according to best international practice. This would require that the bill be amended to explicitly prohibit export of all plastic wastes to non-OECD countries, except those non-hazardous plastic wastes listed under annex IX of the Basel Convention.

● (1520)

Improving accountability for plastic waste exports, particularly in the large volume of trade with the U.S., is critical for Canada if it is to bring its domestic legislation into compliance with its new international legal obligations.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We'll now turn to Ms. St. Godard from the Recycling Council of Ontario.

You have five minutes to give your presentation.

[*English*]

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard (Executive Director, Recycling Council of Ontario): Good afternoon, and thank you for this opportunity to participate in today's session.

Bill C-204 underscores an important consequence of waste, which is the growing problem of plastic waste in particular. As has been noted, it is estimated that more than 90% of Canada's plastic

discards end up in disposal, which has significant economic, environmental and social implications. While this bill highlights the global nature of plastic waste and Canada's responsibility, simply banning its export does not address the root of the issue.

Some plastic discards are desirable commodities. Their use as inputs to replace virgin material in the production of new goods comes with important economic, environmental and social gains. However, some overseas markets that we have become dependent upon employ low environmental, health and safety standards.

● (1525)

In the world of recycling, not all plastics are created equal. Demand, supply and commodity values for different resin types have dramatic variances. Despite these variances, plastics are often managed as a single or homogeneous stream in order to make collection simple and cost-effective. Consequently, plastic exports are often co-mingled, combining several different plastic resin types that are brokered between sellers and buyers as bales or loads. Less desirable and low-grade plastics are mixed and sold with valuable resins that are ultimately cherry-picked away for recycling. Unwanted plastics are then disposed of. As such, what we think has been exported for recycling may, in part, actually end up in disposal or landfill.

Global demand for plastic discards has changed dramatically over the last several years, and as a result, so has the movement of these discards, with China and several other southeast Asian countries limiting purchases and controlling entrance of plastics to certain specific types. In addition, strict contamination standards are being applied, which puts pressure on Canadian collectors, both municipal and private, to vastly improve the source separation of materials. These new restrictions have stunned markets, with some collectors forced to landfill and others to pay for storage while waiting for restrictions to ease and markets to rebound.

Throughout these market unsettlements, analysts, policy-makers and local operators have scrambled for information in order to estimate impacts and explore remedies. This has revealed that a key barrier to reducing plastic waste and improving market conditions is the general lack of market information and reliable data. With no regulatory requirement for tracking plastic discards from points of generation to final disposition, it is simply impossible to fully understand the economic and environmental losses due to disposal or recycling markets, be they local or foreign.

The practice of sending plastic materials to other jurisdictions without reporting and management controls should be stopped. Becoming fully accountable for our plastic waste is critical, which starts with understanding its journey from point of origin to final destination, locally and globally.

It is my recommendation that Bill C-204 be amended to include mandatory reporting requirements to track materials between generators, collectors, and local and foreign processors. This information, centrally organized and freely available, will provide crucial information for policy development, market and industry intelligence, and public awareness.

Better data will provide a clearer understanding of the combined total amount of plastic discards generated and detail the resin types. It will identify, at a resin or product level, what discards are most successfully collected and actually recycled and which are lost to disposal or the environment.

Better data will allow policy-makers to identify plastic materials that are prevalent in the waste streams and identify the regulatory approaches that are appropriate and necessary, such as bans from sale, bans from disposal, expanded extended producer responsibility and other market stimulus approaches, such as mandating a certain amount of recycled content or including plastics in procurement specifications.

Better data will enable more information and improved conditions to attract investment to grow and let flourish our domestic recycling industry. It will provide market knowledge for brand holders and manufacturers to optimize post-consumer recycled content in product design, which spurs demand and increases material value of plastics that may otherwise be lost to disposal.

In closing, while it is critical to account for all waste, and plastics in particular, simply banning export does not effectively address either the full environmental consequences or the economic losses of disposal. Plastic waste is at its peak, and its chronic market volatility requires a multi-faceted policy approach, underpinned by good data that is continually monitored and measured.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to our round of questions, starting with Mr. Albas for five minutes.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all of our witnesses for their testimony today. Obviously there's a lot to discuss here in a very short time, so I would appreciate your understanding that I can't ask everyone. Second, please answer as best you can as briefly as you can.

I'm going to start with Ms. Khan at the David Suzuki Foundation.

Essentially, if we exempt OECD countries, which would include the United States, wouldn't Parliament be creating a loophole whereby Canada could send waste to countries such as the United States, and then once it's there, American actors could then ship it to developing nations?

Dr. Sabaa Khan: I'll respond to the member by saying that yes, there is indeed a loophole when it comes to the Canada-U.S. agreement. The legitimacy of the agreement that exists between Canada and the U.S. under the Basel Convention is disputed, because in the U.S. plastic wastes are not regulated to the equivalent standard of the Basel Convention.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay.

The challenge I have with that particular loophole is a practical one. Once any plastic for recycling leaves our borders, our line of sight becomes incredibly opaque, and we have to basically count on it happening. Really, if I'm someone who's dealing in this area, I'm going to go to the closest and largest customers or to the people who would maybe scale it and use it for their own ends. That would be the United States. I can't see shipping some of the stuff to other countries when the United States is so close.

According to The New York Times, shipments of waste from the United States have not decreased, as they are not a party to the Basel Convention, and there's nothing stopping them from sending it whatever they want, even if the treaty says others are not supposed to accept it.

Does that not prove that we need to be very careful of what we send to the United States?

● (1530)

Dr. Sabaa Khan: It certainly does, and if Canada were to legally implement its new international legal obligations, all mixed plastic waste exports would have to be subject to the procedure of informed consent, which means that no exports could take place without prior notification to the importing country and without also the consent and proof that the processor can actually handle those wastes in an environmentally sound manner.

What the Basel plastic waste amendments do is create enhanced transparency, and that's the problem with the recycling industry. At the moment, you see shipping containers that are labelled as green list waste or recyclable scrap. There's simply not the transparency needed for Canada to control those exports.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm from British Columbia, and obviously we have companies like Merlin Plastics that have done great work in reutilizing materials. Obviously British Columbia, as the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada pointed to earlier, has adopted rules for enhanced producer responsibilities, and we see Ontario and Alberta doing the same—both with Conservative governments, I might add.

It is our waste, and we're responsible for it. Why wouldn't we just put our foot down as a country and say that we will not facilitate non-recyclable waste exports, period?

Dr. Sabaa Khan: There is some cross-border exchange needed when it comes to recyclable plastics, just because of the way global supply chains are set up.

The real problem here is that there just isn't the clarity that we need in the recyclables trade. We won't export hazardous wastes without proof that the waste can be handled in an environmentally sound manner; we have to apply that policy to recyclables as well.

Hazardous waste also continues to cross borders into the U.S. because of our closeness at the border and such, but the key is really the transparency mechanisms. We need to have the proper information. We need to know beforehand—before our exports are leaving the country or before we're even receiving imports—that there's a chain of accountability set up and that financial guarantees are also in place so that any disasters from potential hazardous waste or hazardous recyclable scrap can be taken care of and managed appropriately.

Mr. Dan Albas: Would keeping the existing bill but exempting clean, sorted and labelled plastic waste for recycling address concerns from the David Suzuki Foundation about ensuring that proper recycling could continue in a circular economy?

The Chair: Give a brief answer, please.

Dr. Sabaa Khan: Our main concern is that Canada has new international legal obligations that it has yet to implement into federal law. Bill C-204 is an excellent initiative whereby we can actually make some progress in this regard. When it comes down to Canada meeting its international legal obligations, I think inserting the Basel plastic waste amendments into Bill C-204 would provide a significant process for transparency about our plastic waste exports and imports.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have Mr. Schiefke for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I would like to thank all of our witnesses for being here. The reduction of plastic waste is incredibly important for citizens in my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, so thank you for lending your expertise to this discussion.

Mr. Puckett, I'd like to start with you.

You stated that the bill narrowly focuses on the issue of plastic waste being exported for final disposal but leaves the issue of plastics destined for recycling largely unaddressed, which many stakeholders across Canada have flagged as severely problematic. As a result, the bill would not deal with plastic wastes that are exported for recycling but go to countries that are not in a position to effectively recycle mixed or contaminated plastic waste.

Can you expand on why this is a huge omission and how the bill will essentially do little to tackle the “heart of the problem”, as you put it, which is exports destined for recycling?

Mr. James Puckett: Yes. Thank you.

That's precisely right. The big problem everyone has identified is what is happening in developing countries under the name of recycling. The recycling that takes place is incomplete and highly polluting. It's very easy for people to say, “I'm sending it to the poor countries because they're going to recycle it for us.” The fact is that

it's a very dirty, polluting and toxic situation. Like any industry, recycling can be good or bad.

I'm suggesting that we in Canada need to do what the EU has done. The EU has adopted the Basel ban amendment, which is a separate amendment about not exporting hazardous waste to developing countries, full stop, meaning to non-OECD countries; but the EU said they were also going to add annex II to that list and that ban. Annex II includes household waste and these new plastic wastes that are dirty and mixed. We think we can leave the Davidson bill as it is with respect to not exporting anything for final disposal, but let's add the ban on exports for recycling to developing countries. I think with that amendment, we have ourselves covered.

• (1535)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you very much, Mr. Puckett.

I'd like to go next to Ms. St. Godard.

You stated that banning exports for waste, as this bill seeks to do, doesn't address the key issues. Can you speak to why this bill falls short, and perhaps expand on your comments about more proven, effective ways of reducing plastic waste, such as mandating minimum recycled content and standards, and about the circular economy approach, something that we, as a government, are working towards?

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard: Thank you for that question.

I'll build on Mr. Puckett's commentary around good and bad recycling.

First of all, I think the spirit here is to get more transparency on what it is we are collecting and sending to other shores, and certainly that is similar to what we should be doing domestically as well. Under the guise of recycling, as I mentioned in my comments, not all recyclable material is in fact recycled. We need traceability from points of generation through to final disposition. An outright ban on exporting is not really getting at the heart of the issue, which that is no matter what we are generating or how we are generating it or where it is actually managed, we need to have a line of sight on what that is to ensure that the materials are managed to the highest end uses, and also under very strict human and health protections.

Beyond that, we need to actually start creating demand. We have much more net generated material than we are able to recycle away. We need to create the kinds of demands that create value, and in fact we can try to build the recycling industry right here domestically. We have the power to do that through product specification and through government procurement, all of those activities that increase the amount of recycled content in the products and packaging that we're creating. This can actually increase the value of plastics and, by increasing their value, start to increase recycling here at home.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you, Ms. St. Godard.

My final question in the time remaining is for Mr. Masterson.

Thanks for being here with us.

Our Liberal government met with stakeholders across Canada to listen about the best ways forward on reducing plastic waste and plastic waste exports. Your organization, as well as many others, raised serious concerns about the technical aspects of this particular bill and the difficulties of enforcing it with the legislation as tabled.

Can you expand, and perhaps share, from a practical perspective, ways in which this bill, as is, may be difficult for industry, and also costly to enforce? As we're here trying to improve on this piece of legislation, do you have any suggestions on how it could be changed for the better to help support industry?

Mr. Bob Masterson: That's a lot to cover in a very short period of time.

The Chair: I'll give you 15 seconds, if you don't mind. We're already over time, but perhaps you could answer as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bob Masterson: I have a few key messages.

This is a very complex problem, and a bill with a one-sentence answer clearly can't solve this problem. The main concern here is that "final disposal" is not identified and it isn't defined. That needs serious attention.

The solutions are in EPR. I hope you ask my colleague, Ms. Mantagaris, about extended producer responsibility and the specifics about the markets that are created for recycled materials in British Columbia.

As for the problem we have in Canada, when you look at Ontario alone, you see that we have 256 different markets for recycled materials, not one.

The Chair: I will have to stop you there. We will go to Madame Pauzé for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: How much time did you say, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Sorry, you don't have five minutes, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I have only two and a half minutes.

The Chair: Start, then we'll see.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay. Please take the interpretation into account.

I want to join my colleagues in thanking all the witnesses for being here.

My question is for Mr. Masterson.

We know that the export of various plastics to China has decreased significantly since 2018. Meanwhile, the portion sent to the United States has increased. The United States isn't a signatory to the Basel Convention.

Why are you saying that Bill C-204 would prevent collaboration with the United States, when in reality the partnership has been used extensively?

I'd like you to respond quickly, since I have barely two and a half minutes.

● (1540)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Masterson: First, I'm not aware that trade with the U.S. has increased. It was mentioned earlier that Canada generates about three and a quarter million tonnes of plastic waste a year. Roughly 10% of that is recycled, and about 150,000 tonnes a year is exported. Most of that goes to the U.S. That was consistent with some of the numbers we heard before. I've not seen any evidence that this has changed in the last years. As my colleague Ms. St. Godard and others have said, that data is hard to come by. All these are very rough estimates.

Again, the main concern is what is meant by "final disposal", and how does that get read—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Sorry. Unfortunately, I must interrupt you.

You said earlier that there will be changes, but that you're aiming for 2030. At a conference in 2019, the president of Dow Chemical claimed that there wasn't enough demand for recycled plastic to make it viable. However, a science industry is developing compostable bioplastics. This concerns Bosk Bioproducts in Quebec and Advanced BioCarbon 3D in British Columbia. This market is promising, but you're putting it off until 2030.

I also want to remind you that there's an action plan for the implementation of a circular economy. It's already in place at the European Commission. A Quebec centre of expertise already provides advisory services and solutions regarding this issue to governments and companies. In my opinion, 2030 is much too far away. There are ways to act now.

Why not?

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Masterson: We are acting now. We have the zero plastic waste action plan from the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Every one of those elements is to be introduced and worked on.

At this point, as Mr. Albas mentioned, we have a full producer responsibility program in B.C. In the province of B.C., nearly half of all plastic waste generated is captured, recovered and reused. On average, that's five times better than the rest of the country.

Ontario, Alberta and Quebec are all modernizing their recycling programs, moving to fully industry-paid extended producer responsibility and harmonized systems. British Columbia has, by and large, a single provincial recycling system.

In Ontario alone, we have 256 different systems. It will not work with 256 different systems—

The Chair: Mr. Masterson, we have to move on. Madame Pauzé, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, before I finish, I'd like to ask one thing.

I think that I'm out of time. Is that right?

The Chair: That's right.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'd like to ask for Mr. Puckett's and Ms. St. Godard's texts, because we didn't receive them and I found them very informative.

The Chair: We'll send them to you once they have been translated.

Is that right, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Isabelle Duford): Yes, that's right.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you.

The Chair: I'll now give the floor to Ms. Collins.

You have two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Puckett, a legal analysis by the Center for International Environmental Law spoke about how the recent Canada-U.S. arrangement on plastic waste violates our obligations under the Basel Convention. As you mentioned, because the U.S. never signed on to the Basel Convention and doesn't regulate plastic waste exports in the same way we do, this has been characterized as a backdoor agreement that allows our government to get around our international obligations on plastic waste.

I am concerned about this agreement. I'm also aware of the reality that many communities rely on sending plastic to the U.S. for recycling. How do we still allow the legitimate trade in recyclable plastic waste while also making sure that the hazardous plastic waste—the plastic waste for special consideration—from Canada doesn't end up being shipped to other countries, without environmental controls in place, by the U.S. once we ship it there?

Mr. James Puckett: Thank you. That has us very concerned as well. We learned quite late. We were not consulted as stakeholders. The environmental groups in Canada were also not consulted.

This bilateral pact that was enjoined between the U.S. and Canada basically allows Canada to ignore its Basel obligations. These new plastic amendments, which are meant to control the mixed and dirty and difficult-to-recycle plastics and to provide transparency and monitoring and controls over them, were just ignored. They said, "We are going to sign this agreement, and by doing that we will maintain the status quo of opaque, untransparent, uncontrolled trade." This has us very worried, because the U.S. is a major exporter of all kinds of problematic waste to developing countries, and it's very easy for a Canadian actor now to just send things through the U.S. and avoid the obligations of the Basel Convention.

The agreement itself was highly criticized, because although countries are allowed to have separate bilateral agreements under the Basel Convention, they have to have the same controls and environmental rigour as the convention itself. Saying you're not going to do anything with these new definitions certainly does not represent the same level of control as accepting these new controls.

It's illegal on the face of it, in our view, but it's also very problematic in terms of what it's going to do with respect to North America contributing to the contamination of the developing world.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on now to Mr. Redekopp for five minutes.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to all of the witnesses.

I want to start with Mr. Puckett again.

The Basel Convention was implemented under a Conservative government back in the late eighties and nineties. Of course it's in effect now, but we've had these issues. Everyone remembers the Malaysia issues, and some of the others have been mentioned. There was a big brouhaha with Canadian plastic overseas.

You mentioned that the Liberals have essentially ignored this problem in the agreements we have with the U.S., and Ms. Khan mentioned the EU waste shipment regulations. Doesn't the fact that we're still having problems prove that we need further legislation, such as Bill C-204, to prevent things like this from happening in the future?

Mr. James Puckett: Yes, and Bill C-204 is a start. It shows intent to deal with this problem, and I appreciate that very much, but it falls short. We need to model what the EU has done, because the big problem is the so-called recycling trade in which the developing world is not handling this material.

This material is not recyclable. It is mixed and dirty, and even when you have a low-wage situation, as in countries like Malaysia, they don't have the people power to sort this material and clean it, and then you always have this residual hazardous material. The recycling trade is very dirty. That's why it's been going to the developing countries, and that's what we need to control it. We're saying to keep Bill C-204 as it is, with a full ban to all countries. Put down your foot, as Mr. Albas said: No exports for final disposals to any country, but for recycling, no exports to the developing world.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you.

Maybe we could tweak this by allowing for clean sorted materials. That would be a good thing.

Mr. Masterson, thanks for meeting me a month ago. It helped me a lot to learn about this situation, and I do recall talking about British Columbia's province-wide mature recycling program versus what exists in smaller jurisdictions. In my hometown of Saskatoon, we probably don't have a similar situation. We just don't have the ability to clean and sort like that.

Now Conservatives are again proposing to put more teeth into the Basel Convention here in Canada. I can understand why industry is a little concerned, but isn't stronger legislation needed so that we can encourage a stronger and better circular economy here in the country?

Mr. Bob Masterson: Absolutely, and there's much work under way to do that through the zero plastic waste action plan from the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

Again, I feel as though I'm on the wrong side of an argument here. I agree with what our colleagues are saying. Sending unsorted materials for disposal is a bad thing, but you're trying to solve a complex issue with, again, one statement: "Thou shalt not send plastic waste"—and you have a poor list—"for final disposal", and you have not defined "final disposal". Again, if this were brought into line after considerable consultation about what we are covering, that would be great.

I do take exception to this concept that a Canada-U.S. agreement is some sort of loophole. The Basel Convention specifically allows, under article 11, for agreements like this to take place, and in fact Canada and the U.S. have had a Basel Convention implementation treaty since 1986, so it's a bit of a misnomer that is being applied here to what's happening.

I think the key is to draft this bill in such a way that it accomplishes the objectives but does not get in the way of the movement of plastic materials that are used as resources. Recovery between Canada and the United States is a key part of this process.

It will take caution and it will take much more than one line of code in the national legislation to achieve its objectives, unfortunately—

• (1550)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: For a bit of clarity, then, assuming this legislation moves forward, what specifically would you change?

Mr. Bob Masterson: Well, if you look at the text of the Basel Convention, where you had 170 countries involved, you see that it's a comprehensive piece. If you also look at what's in the Canada-

U.S. agreement that was finalized last year, you see there are a lot of details there too.

Certainly we would look to revise the list and not focus on products and materials that are creatable, not focus on polymers and not focus on chemical feedstocks, on things like ethylene. It's nonsensical to include ethylene on a list like this.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Okay. Thanks.

Ms. Khan, we've been talking in Canada about a plastics ban. I guess my question for you here is whether you believe that controlling Canada's plastic waste domestically through an effective domestic-based recycling program is an effective approach compared to the Liberal minister's simple solution of labelling plastics toxic.

Dr. Sabaa Khan: Thank you for your question.

The Chair: Could we have a very quick response, please? It's a complicated question, I'm sure.

Dr. Sabaa Khan: I think there are two different issues. One fact is that Canada has international obligations under Basel and also international obligations under the OECD agreement, and then it has an agreement with the U.S., which is actually in conflict with the other two agreements.

That set aside, extended producer responsibility is a part of the solution as well, but in order to enhance EPR programs and in order to stimulate the recycling industry at home, we need to have strong legislation so that those plastics are not leaking into the environment and they can't be opaquely traded towards the OECD or the U.S.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Baker is next.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thanks very much, Chair. How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have five minutes.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here today. I'd love to ask each of you questions, but I won't have time to do that, of course, in five minutes.

I want to start with Ms. St. Godard and just ask about this, if I may. To my mind, if this bill were passed unamended, as is, and came into effect very shortly, it would have carry-on effects within the waste processing and recycling system here in Canada. Can you speak to that? Can you tell me what some of those implications might be?

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard: Thank you for the question.

I think there are two angles to answering that. I think the first is that the definition of final disposition is clear here. It is imperative to pick up on the notion that even though we are shipping loads that are defined as recycling, prior consent doesn't mean that the loads that actually are being received are actually being recycled. The issue is not just prior consent. The issue is tracking this material to ensure that it's actually being recycled.

I will just make the comment that in the material we're actually processing here on domestic soil, we sometimes have 30% to 35% residual kick-out. That means that 35% of a load from Canadian processors as well actually ends in landfill. Banning loads that are destined for final disposition, as the bill does in its language, is not going to address that issue.

I do know that we have more Canadian recycling infrastructure capacity here than we are using, and the leakage into other jurisdictions actually prevents industry.... It certainly doesn't encourage investments on Canadian soil to enhance recycling and expand the industry here. I think what we need is more transparency on how and where this material is being generated and where it's being managed domestically, as well as tracking it through to final disposition in exports.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Sure. I hear that.

I have to ask you to answer this in 15 or 20 seconds because of the time.

If this bill passed tomorrow and came into effect, could our waste management systems handle the situation? If suddenly we stop exporting this category of plastics, where would all the plastic go?

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard: I think we'd be looking to landfill.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Right. Okay. Would our landfills currently have the capacity for that?

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard: I can't answer the question because we don't have good data to even know what 90% export actually means.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Yes. Okay, so maybe not.

If I can, I'm going to go to Ms. Khan with my remaining two minutes.

I want to go back to what I've heard from a number of you presenting to us today. It's that the problem we're trying to solve, or that at least was articulated by Mr. Davidson, is how plastic waste is disposed of at its final destination. What I've heard from a number of you, including Ms. St. Godard just a moment ago, is that we need transparency, line of sight and accountability—those are some of the words you've all used—to ensure that these materials are properly disposed of or recycled, whichever the case may be.

Ms. Khan, is it your perspective or the perspective of the David Suzuki Foundation that the solution to this problem therefore is the implementation of the Basel Convention? Is that essentially what you're telling us?

• (1555)

Dr. Sabaa Khan: What essentially I'm telling you is that the Basel Convention is the highest international legal standard—also

the international minimum legal standard—when it comes to trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste and certain other waste.

Plastic waste has newly been introduced into that framework as another waste that needs to be controlled under the procedure of prior informed consent. This doesn't mean that the global plastic waste trade has been banned. In fact, there are no bans in place. It is simply a procedure for transparency to make sure that an accountability chain has been set up, so I believe that Canada needs to ramp up its pace in implementing the Basel Convention obligations.

This is a very purposeful ratification that Canada did. Initially, in the month of March, Canada indicated that it would not accept the plastic waste amendments. In that case, the agreement that it had made with the U.S. would have been fine, because it wouldn't have had to control annex II Y48 wastes under the prior informed consent controls. However, in December Canada retracted its non-acceptance and officially accepted and ratified those amendments.

The EU has already put these amendments into domestic legislation. Any trade between the EU and Canada of dirty mixed plastics has to go through the PIC controls, the prior informed consent controls, and has to basically go through notification and consent.

We would like to see Canada meet the international minimum standard for exporting plastic wastes and meet its obligations.

The Chair: Thanks.

We have time for one more round.

We will start with Mr. Albas for five minutes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, thank you to all the witnesses.

Mr. Masterson, I would like to ask you.... I'm sorry we keep going back to this. I want to make sure, when we make these changes, that they are done through a proper process and that those concerns are heard.

Would keeping the existing bill but exempting clean, sorted and labelled plastic waste for recycling address your concerns and the concerns about ensuring that proper recycling can continue?

Mr. Bob Masterson: It would not do so entirely. I think you have to come up with a very clear definition of "final disposal". Also, as discussed, you will still have mixed bales, mixed loads of plastic.

One of the main concerns is that the bill has to be crafted in a way that allows the integrated North American economy, which includes an integrated approach to waste management, to continue to operate, or at least be aware of what the repercussions will be, depending on what the final definitions are.

Mr. Dan Albas: I appreciate your pointing out that this multi-faceted solution needs to be found, and particularly your comments around provincial regulation having to step up and create scale within Canada as part of it.

Put another way, does your industry ultimately have a problem with banning raw, non-recyclable waste from export, as this bill seeks to do?

Mr. Bob Masterson: I'm going to defer to my colleague Ms. Mantagaris on this one. I've handled most of the questions, and her voice deserves to be heard. I think she was hoping to talk more about some of the solutions.

Ms. Elena Mantagaris (Vice-President, Plastics Division, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada): Thanks, Bob.

I'm sorry, Mr. Albas. You're asking whether we have an objection to the export of.... Can you repeat that?

Mr. Dan Albas: Ultimately, do you have a problem with banning non-recyclable, raw waste from exports, as this bill seeks to do?

Ms. Elena Mantagaris: We do have a concern. Let me come back to the definition of "final disposal" and what it actually means or doesn't mean in the context of this document.

Many of you will be familiar with one of our leading members, Ice River Springs water company. They are a "no waste" facility. They have a by-product, ultimately, an element of the plastic that they recycle, that they can't use. It's called purge. They purge it from their system, and it is exported as blocks. It gets used as filler in the manufacturing sector for sofas and couches.

Do we consider that to be "final disposal"? Do we consider it a proper reuse of material in another environment? How are we defining this stuff?

• (1600)

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes, but again, would it be labelled? It could be categorized on its own and separated out so that it's not mixed waste. It is obviously a resource. If we created an exemption, it would clearly cover products such as that.

Ms. Elena Mantagaris: This is one example. We would have to see the list of what is being exempted before I could provide any kind of blanket statement like that.

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes. I get a sense, though, that if it's clean and it's sorted and it has value, then we should allow that chain to continue uninterrupted.

Ms. Elena Mantagaris: Absolutely.

Mr. Dan Albas: That's it. Okay.

Are you concerned that shipments of plastic waste to developing countries from the United States have not decreased and that the U.S. could act as a transfer point for Canadian raw waste to get around the Basel Convention?

Ms. Elena Mantagaris: Canada has signed the Basel Convention, and if there's a requirement for additional rigour in the type of tracking that's being proposed, the government may wish to consider that. We know that many of our member companies are trading plastic waste that is repurposed and reused in new plastic products, and that is the kind of trade and support of recycling and the circular economy that we want to see continue.

Mr. Dan Albas: To that point, though, our analyst has set up some very good charts. You see quite clearly the Chinese decision and a drop in exports. Then you see a slow and then sudden spike to the United States.

Again, The New York Times did a piece this past week that outlined concerns within the United States. I take it, though, that your industry wants to be part of the solution, wants to be positive, because ultimately we can do this in Canada. Is that not right?

Ms. Elena Mantagaris: Yes, we can.

Not having seen the data in front of me, the recycling facilities continue to grow and expand, both in Canada and the U.S., so part of that trade expansion is the expansion of the recycling system that we want to see.

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes, okay. I think that goes back to my point about making sure there's a clear carve-out for clean, sorted and labelled recyclable material that could be utilized up the value chain.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

We'll go to Ms. Saks for five minutes.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses who have come here today to help us unpack this so we have a clearer understanding of where we can improve and also know how we can better use the tools we have.

Mr. Masterson or Ms. Mantagaris, I think you have plenty to offer to this conversation today. Does the chemistry industry overall support Bill C-204? Can we know where you sit on this bill? I'm jumping off where my colleague Mr. Schiefke initially asked the question of Mr. Masterson.

Mr. Bob Masterson: No. Again, it's a categorical "no" to the bill as written.

Do we support the Basel Convention? Absolutely. Do we support other means to address plastic waste? Absolutely. A one-sentence bill for a complex issue like this, given the size of the economy you're talking about and the issues we have to solve, is not an acceptable bill for the problem at hand. I think we've heard everybody say the same, with suggestions of an amendment here, an amendment here.

One of the MPs suggested giving this adequate consideration when we're in the discussion on the reform of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. That would be much more acceptable. This bill is not commensurate with the challenges at hand. It's a categorical "no".

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you.

Just to clarify, as Bill C-204 was being introduced, were you able to share your concerns with the bill's sponsor? Were you able to offer stakeholder views on it?

Mr. Bob Masterson: Absolutely, thank you, yes. Everyone has been very open to discussing this bill.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: That's great. Wonderful.

With regard to the Basel Convention and U.S.-Canada trade agreements, could you highlight for us how you view the management of harmful plastics and what we should be considering in the structure we have in place now and how it will guide us? There have obviously been plenty of concerns over exports crossing the border.

Mr. Bob Masterson: Again, we'll go back to some of the numbers. We are focused here on solving a problem that represents something far less than 5% of Canada's or North America's exported waste, and then the portion of it that's not recycled is even smaller. I'm not discounting the environmental issues involved with that, but I think the committee's time, especially given the challenge and the opportunity to create a circular economy for plastic waste, could focus on what's going to help solve the problem, not worry about that small 1% or 2%.

As mentioned, it is a highly integrated economy, and the issue of innovation... Recycling isn't a fixed point. It's not one solution. There are many different solutions, and as we've heard from some of the witnesses here, the solutions come all the time.

One of the challenges we have as an industry is related to some of the technologies we would like to see to reprocess these materials to get them back into resins. Whenever discussions take place about chemical recycling or turning them into non-crude fuels, many of our critics say that it's not recycling. As an industry, you're coming up with innovative solutions to manage these problems and you're constantly told that it's not recycling.

You'll quickly understand why we have such strong concerns about a bill that doesn't define "recycling" or "final disposal". We have to have many innovations in the next 10 years, and as Madame Pauzé said, we don't know what's going to happen. We know there have to be a lot of solutions, and they're not in our line of sight right now. Therefore, we have to be careful to draft something that leaves a lot of flexibility for the future solutions for recovering and adding value on this very important issue in the years to come.

• (1605)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: My next question is for Ms. St. Godard.

We touched earlier on provincial and federal recycling programs. What actions by the federal and provincial governments does your organization support to tackle the problem of plastic waste in Canada?

We talked about the concern about diversion to landfills, so if we have a made-in-Canada solution, could you touch on that, both provincially and federally?

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard: There are really three major items.

First, there is an expansion of extended producer responsibility laws to transfer the legal, financial and operational responsibility back to the actors in the chain that have the most influence, and those would be the manufacturers, brand holders, designers and sellers. However, we've only been able to tackle that in a Canadian context for very specific product lines, such as the plastics that are part of electronics.

When we think of plastics, we often only think about packaging, which represents about 30% of all plastics sold in the marketplace, based on the data that we have. EPR has really done some great things that relate to very narrow product categories, such as electronics and packaging, but there are all kinds of plastic products in the marketplace that at this point are not covered under EPR.

Second, we need to minimize, reduce, and eliminate single use. We know that one-use products are not sustainable in any way, shape or form, either environmentally or economically.

Third, government, in particular, should be using its buying power to create a demand for post-consumer recycling specifications.

The Chair: We have to go Ms. Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

You have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In light of some of the questions that I've heard, I want to reiterate that waste management is also a provincial responsibility.

Mr. Puckett, I have a question for you. I also have a second question and I don't have much time, so I'd like you to respond quickly.

Based on your experience in the environmental field, how do you think the environment and human health would be harmed by a sudden increase in demand for plastic waste management and disposal here in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. James Puckett: That is a really important question. We're talking about the true solution, which is to create less plastic waste, as Ms. St. Godard was saying. We have to stop producing single-use plastics.

We're not going to be able to recycle our way out of the plastic waste crisis. That is very clear. Recycling technology is not up to it, and if you're going to end up burning it or making fuel from it, you'll exacerbate the climate situation badly.

We should not be finding new hiding places globally for it. The true solution is to stop it at the source, turn off the tap, put away our mops, and really stop making so much plastic waste. That's the true solution.

We applaud Canada for taking a lead on this, as the EU has done.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Puckett. You echo a great deal of what I think, which is that we must start by reducing our waste before we recycle or recover it.

I'll now turn to Mr. Masterson.

I'd like you to clarify an announcement made in Alberta in 2020. The announcement referred to a program to diversify the oil and gas sector in order to boost investment in the industry. Dow, which is one of your members, and other companies are applauding this program. It's called the "Natural Gas Vision and Strategy."

Can you list the steps that you and your members, as an association, will take to encourage your sector to go green?

The Chair: You have five seconds, Mr. Masterson.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Masterson: First is the commitment to make sure that the plastic packaging can be and will be recycled. That is the goal defined by all of our members, including Dow and other companies.

Second is to work with other stakeholders so that materials are recovered and are recycled by 2040. When we think of the context that just 9% of the plastic in Canada is post-consumer plastic that is currently recovered and recycled, we see that it's a mammoth task.

The industry fully agrees with those goals. We have already seen some very interesting design developments—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Masterson, I'm sorry, but we must continue with Ms. Collins.

[*English*]

Please go ahead, Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a quick question for Mr. Puckett.

Mr. Masterson mentioned some of the things we might want to take out of that list, things like feedstock. Is there anything that you would recommend adding to the schedule?

Mr. James Puckett: As you mentioned, I believe, polyvinyl chloride plastic waste is glaringly missing. That list, despite what Mr. Davidson said about it, is not drawn from the Basel Convention. I'm not sure where that list came from, but I would recommend using the Basel Convention listings. Canada is a party to the

convention, and the rest of the world recognizes these listings. PVC is glaringly absent.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you so much.

In terms of some of the suggested amendments that have been talked about so far, one from Mr. Albas around schedule 7 does not include recyclable plastics that are labelled, cleaned and sorted in accordance with industry standards. Do you think that this would solve some of the issues? Also, would you have any concerns if that were the only amendment, or is there more amendment needed?

Mr. James Puckett: What we're getting at here is that the Basel Convention's latest rules, adopted in 2019, divide plastic into three categories: hazardous plastic, plastics for special consideration and non-hazardous plastics. We would like to see those for special consideration—the mixed and dirty, difficult-to-recycle plastics—controlled for all countries but banned to the developing countries. We can accept the final disposal ban that Mr. Davidson is proposing, because that's very little of the trade, actually, and then add the real problem, as the EU has done, and say that we're not going to export that annex II waste anymore to developing countries.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: With Q and A together, half a minute.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Okay.

Ms. Khan, would you mind answering the same question?

Dr. Sabaa Khan: We've written down the same positions in our written brief, and I'll refer you to our written brief. That's exactly what our recommendations were.

The Chair: Great. Thank you.

I don't know who's up for the Conservatives. Is it Mr. Jeneroux?

Mr. Dan Albas: No, I will take it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It's Mr. Albas. Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you.

Mr. Masterson, I'm going back to you because this is a complex issue.

You mentioned the need to have provinces adopt their own legislation. We heard Ms. St. Godard say that there could be further steps taken to require producers and recyclers to meet certain conditions. To me that's clearly something that the provincial governments do. Could you talk a little more about what needs to be done at the provincial level? The last thing we want to do is have a "who's on first?" routine between the federal government and the provinces. I think it's quite clear that this is a federal matter, because it involves our border and what we allow out of our country.

• (1615)

Mr. Bob Masterson: I'll defer again to my colleague Ms. Mantagaris.

Ms. Elena Mantagaris: I think we have several provinces that are already starting on the right path with extended producer responsibility. Referencing the B.C. model, we want to see, and we are pleased to see, that those measures are going to be moving forward in Ontario. Quebec has also signalled that they'll be moving forward with them, and Alberta has certainly signalled their keen interest. Each of those EPR programs has clear targets for recycling and defines what counts as diversion from landfill. These are the kinds of practices that we need to see strengthened in provinces across the country, and we certainly are very supportive of that as an industry.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay.

Ms. St. Godard, I referenced your earlier statement about how things had to go further. Given the fact that provinces are clearly moving in this direction and we want to have those that.... Again, I would point to companies like Merlin Plastics. They would simply say they look to the province to give them guidance to help create their market.

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard: I think extended producer responsibility certainly is the policy of choice at the provincial level to try to tackle plastic waste. There's no question about that. The issue is that the targets are systemically low in their regulations.

I'll cite Ontario as an example. After three decades of a blue box program that is world renowned, our recovery rates for plastic packaging as a stream have been stagnant at about 30% for some time, and the new proposal coming forward today is to keep them where they are.

EPR is only as good as the targets that are set.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'll go to Mr. Masterson.

You said earlier that B.C. does well above that. Could you point out some of the strong points of my home province of British Columbia in regard to this?

I do think this is what Canadians would like to know. Quite honestly, until I became a member of Parliament, I thought the rules for recycling were the same across Canada, not just across British Columbia.

Mr. Bob Masterson: There are two key things. One is regulations, as Ms. St. Godard just said. The targets are regulated and you need to achieve them, and they're being raised as we speak.

The second is harmonization. One of the challenges in Ontario—you've heard me say this before—is that you have 256 different

programs. None of this discussion today has come back and talked about the municipalities. When we think about these mixed bales and what needs to be done with them, the recycling industry—the Merlins and others—and the waste transporters are part of that discussion, but most of it in most parts of Canada is the responsibility of the municipal government, and they simply lack....

A small town can't process all the plastics it has, so what do they do? They bale them up into mixed bales. They all try to market to the same people, but there's no market for them, so they either put them in their own landfill or they give them to someone else and ask them to please get rid of them. That's not an easy problem.

What British Columbia allows is for your coffee cup lids to be collected at the scale of a province of several million people. Now you can find a market for your used coffee cup lids for sure.

EPR-regulated targets and a harmonized system are key ingredients to succeed. If Ontario doesn't get those in place, it will not succeed, as Ms. St. Godard has said.

Mr. Dan Albas: I have no further questions. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Masterson, that last answer clarified a lot of things for me and crystallized my understanding.

Last but not least, we have Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you.

You left off at a beautiful spot, Mr. Masterson.

I was on a waste management review committee at the City of Guelph. We looked at projects like the Partners in Project Green at Pearson airport, where an eco-industrial zone was set up. As a municipality, we were trying to increase our diversion from landfill. We got it up to 68% diversion from landfill for our waste streams.

A lot of this is really up to local municipalities, and how we support them through our legislation is really important. I'd like you to comment on how that squares with this type of a one-line private member's bill that could end up telling municipalities that they now have to accept all this waste that they were shipping to the United States.

Mr. Bob Masterson: I really don't have anything to add. I think you've answered your question.

Elena, I don't know if you have anything to add there.

• (1620)

Ms. Elena Mantagaris: I think you've hit the nail on the head.

What's being proposed is this punitive approach without any of the systems or infrastructure to support any kind of alternative. Part of what Bob and many here are saying is that this is a multi-faceted challenge and issue. We need multi-faceted responses. One line in a bill like this does not allow us to actually put the effort and investments into the things we need to support the goal that everyone is saying they have, which is a circular economy for plastics.

Quite frankly, I argue that this is the kind of bill that's actually going to hamper that circular economy. We already have businesses that have been investing in the infrastructure and the systems to enable that circular economy. This bill is proposing to put a halt to that, rather than supporting the future development of that sector.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you. I really appreciate your statement there.

To go over to Ms. St. Godard, when we reframe this as an opportunity for resource management rather than waste management, I think of the resources we can get from the next life of plastics. We have Hematite in Guelph, which relies on a North American supply chain to be able to draw in polymers they can use in automotive moulding or architectural moulding. Many of the businesses in Guelph are saying that it's less expensive for them to purchase plastics and extract resins from them than it is to create petroleum-based products or bio-based plastics.

Ms. St. Godard, this legislation seems to fly in the face of progress in terms of stopping what we all want to stop, which is plastics going into landfill.

Ms. Jo-Anne St. Godard: The amount of plastic materials we're generating and have to landfill—irrespective of whether it's domestic or foreign—is a market failure. It's an economic failure. In order for us to apply a value or increase the value of these plastic discs, we need to come at it from a variety of different angles.

Governments have a unique opportunity through their procurement power, which is \$200 million in annual government spending in a year. To try to generate some of these plastic materials from recycled plastic is critical, but we need to make sure we have tracing and reporting in place so that we understand what we're measuring and what those impacts actually are.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

Mr. Masterson, first of all, Canada was leading in the negotiation of these amendments with the Basel Convention—

Mr. Bob Masterson: That's correct.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: —and was really driving the discussions. We then had to put it into a lower gear while we waited for the American government to reconstitute itself and then have the Americans come into our agreement that we were working on globally. Hopefully, we'll have the Americans join the global community on this issue, as they did with the climate change agreements that we negotiated in Paris.

The Canadian government has actually taken a leadership role. Earlier comments made it sound as though we really didn't want this agreement.

You've been working with the Canadian government. Could you tell us how good we are?

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I hate to say you have to be brief, but anyway...

Mr. Bob Masterson: All Canadian governments of all stripes have been fully committed to the Basel Convention since day one, including—and I think you folks are a little aggressive here—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Conservative governments.

Mr. Bob Masterson: —on our good neighbours to the south.

You know, we have an agreement with the United States, a treaty on the implementation of Basel. We've done the right thing here. We have an agreement to cover this extension of Basel, so let's just be cautious in the rhetoric we have with our neighbours to the south. It's an integrated economy, and we rely on each other very heavily.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Boy, do we ever.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank the committee members, whose questions brought to light a great deal of information on the topic.

I want to thank the witnesses for sharing their knowledge with the committee. The discussion was extremely informative. I was able to fill in several gaps in my understanding of the topic. I want to thank them for coming and invite them to disconnect if they wish to do so.

I have a few announcements for the committee members.

On Wednesday, we'll continue our study of this bill. In the first part of the meeting, we'll hear from representatives of Environment and Climate Change Canada and Global Affairs Canada. In the second hour, we'll debate a number of amendments.

The March 22 meeting is reserved for committee business. We'll review the second draft of the report on the study on zero emission vehicles. We'll use this meeting to provide instructions to the analysts for the report on the enforcement of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

If all goes well, then ideally we would be able to launch the five-meeting study on plastics.

Does anyone want to move to adjourn today's meeting?

Ms. Pauzé is moving to adjourn and there seems to be a consensus.

The meeting is adjourned.

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